

Introduction to Women Empowerment and relative study of issues, challenges and government policies evolved in Women Empowerment.

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Abstract: In this paper an attempt is made to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India. This paper also contains Issues and Challenges involved in Women Empowerment. Empowerment of women is the process of boosting of social, economic and political status of women who are traditionally deprived in the society. In 21st century where women are progressing in each sector, they are getting victimized by various social evils. It shows that women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. This paper explains why women empowerment is needed, what steps doe's government is taking for this and what are the challenges involved in the process of women empowerment.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Socio-Economic Status. Crimes against women, Policy implications

I. Introduction

Empowerment is a multifaceted task. Empowering individuals or a group of individuals means to make them realize their full identity and powers in all aspects of life. Empowerment certainly is not just to provide facilities to the individuals or a group of individuals, it is beyond that. Well know Webster dictionary says word empowerment indicates the situation of authority or to be authorized or to be powerful. So in simple words it can be said that empowers means to authorize. Relating this definition with women empowerment it is clear that empowerment is process which gives women authority or power to challenge the situation.

Initially National Movement and various reform movements covered the way for women liberations from the social evils and religious taboos. In result Act of Sati 1829, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act' 1856, the Child Restriction Act, 1929, Women Property Right Act, 1937 etc. came one by other. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 has determined the age for marriage. Under the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, an unmarried women, widow or divorced can take child in adoption.

Similarly, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 says that any person who gives, takes, or supports the giving or taking of dowry shall be punished with imprisonment, which may extend to six months or fine up to Rs.5000/ or with both. There are many schemes conducted by government, listed below in this paper.

II. Women Empowerment

Women empowerment means libration of women from the vicious grips of caste, economical, social, political, and gender-based discrimination. It means appreciating women the freedom to make life choices. What is gender gap? Why it should be get filled? Why are women not given that equality level and trust in the society? Why women still have to run for their rights? Question like these gives rise to think of women empowerment in India.

Women embody almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown uneven sex ratio. Female's population has been comparatively lower than males. Similarly social status of women is also apprehensive, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. Today also gender disabilities and discriminations are major issues in India. At earlier time women were getting equal status with men. But they had faced some difficulties during epic and post-Vedic ages. Controversy is seen in the paradoxical situation where women were sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave. Considering all this women empowerment can be featured as

1. **Educational Empowerment of Women:** Educationally empowering women means giving women knowledge, skills, and awareness of women's right and confidence to use them.
2. **Economical and Occupational Empowerment of Women:** With this empowerment women will be able to maintain their own better quality of material life. It will help in reducing their financial dependability. And it will also give them new respected and independent approach towards life.
3. **Political Empowerment of Women:** This means the existence of a political system which will support the participation in and control by the women of the political decision making process and in governance.
4. **Social Empowerment of Women:** Socially empowering of women will promote gender equality. Because of which men and women will have same opportunities, rights, outcome and obligations in every aspect of life.
5. **Human rights for women:** Being human where women can sense, imagine and have thinking ability she should have right to express herself freely. Everyone should think of giving this freedom to the women as their right.

III. Characteristics of women empowerment

The following are the characteristics of women empowerment.

1. Women empowerment implies giving power to women. Empowerment enables a greater degree of self-confidence and sense of independence among women. And it is making women well placed.
2. Women empowerment allows women to organize themselves in better way, increase their self-reliance and it provides greater self determination.
3. Women empowerment occurs within sociology, political cultural, familial, psychological and economic spheres and at various levels such as community, individual and group.
4. Empowerment means giving equal status to women. It provides greater access to knowledge, resources and independence in decision making.
5. Women empowerment means exposing the dictatorial powers of existing gender social relations.
6. Women empowerment is acquiring power for women. It is a process in order to understand women rights and to perform their responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way.
7. Women empowerment gives the capacity or power to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society to the women.
8. Women empowerment makes women more powerful to face the challenges of life, to overcome to the disabilities and inequalities.
9. Women empowerment is an ongoing dynamic process which magnify women's abilities to change the structure and theories that keep them lower ranking. Women empowerment is a process of creating awareness and capacity building.

IV. Challenges in Women empowerment Process

There are several challenges involved in the process of women empowerment. Some of them are as follows:

- 1) **Morality and Inequality:** In developing country like india a preference is given to the birth of son than girl child. Due to this gender bias in health and nutrition there is unusually higher mortality rate in women. Hence there is reduction in no. of women in overall population.
- 2) **Inequality in House:** Inequality starts at home itself. Where division of work shows it clearly, work like housework and childcare are responsibility of women and earning and monitory tasks are given to men.
- 3) **Poverty:** Poverty is one of the greatest threats to peace in the world. Reduction of poverty should be a national goal. Because of this poverty, women are exploited as domestic workers.
- 4) **Education:** Considering the case of India in which 83 % of men are education and only 66% women are literate. This major gap in between men and women literacy ration shows that education is easily available to men than women. Because of this gender bias education system getting higher education,

specialized professional trainings are tough for women resulting hit women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.

- 5) **Health and Safety:** The health and safety concerns of women are supreme for the wellbeing of a country. It is an important majoring factor in empowerment of women in any country. However there are scary facts where maternal healthcare is concerned.
- 6) **Professional Inequality:** Women face countless obstacles in male dominated and customized vicinity in Private enterprises and also in Government Offices.

V. Constitutional Provisions For Empowering Women In India

- 1) Equality before law for all persons (Article-14).
- 2) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15(I)). However, special provisions may be made by the state in favors of women and children Article 15(3).
- 3) Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16).
- 4) State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a); (v) equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d).
- 5) Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42).
- 6) Promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women Article 51A(e).
- 7) Reservation of not less than one-third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies, viz; Panchayats and Municipalities (Articles 343(d) and 343 (T).

VI. Government Schemes For Women Empowerment

The Government programs for empowerment of women was started in early 1954 in India but the actual participation began in 1974. At present, the Government of India has multiple schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

1. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
2. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October,1993.
3. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
4. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
5. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
6. Swayasjdha.
7. Swa Shakti Group.
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women(STEP).
9. Swalamban.
10. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
11. Hostels for working women.
12. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
13. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
14. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),
15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
16. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.
17. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
18. Dhanalakahmi (2008).
19. Short Stay Homes.

20. Ujjawala (2007): A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
21. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
23. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).
24. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
25. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
26. Working Women's Forum.
27. Indira Mahila Kendra.
28. Mahila Samiti Yojana.
29. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
30. Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.
31. SBI's Sree Shakti Scheme.
32. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
33. NGO's Credit Schemes.
34. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes
35. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
36. One Stop Centre Scheme
37. Women Helpline Scheme
38. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
39. NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
40. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman
41. Mahila police Volunteers
42. Mahila E-Haat
43. Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
44. NIRBHAYA

VII. Conclusion

In 21st century where women are progressing in each sector, they are getting victimized by various social evils. It shows that women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-dependent, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. This paper explains what is empowerment of women, its feature, characteristic, why empowerment of women is necessary, constitutional provision for women empowerment and certain government schemes conducted for empowerment of women. Hence this can be conclude as there are multiple ways to empower women like by making Changes in women's mobility and social interaction, by Providing education, by providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing, by Changing women's access to and control over resources and by Changing women's labor patterns.

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